

OVERCOMING SILENCE

**WOMEN'S
VOICES IN THE
ABUSE CRISIS**

27TH NOVEMBER 2018



VOICES
OF FAITH

**THIS MAGAZINE WILL
SHOWCASE THE STORIES
AND DISCUSSIONS FROM
THE 2018 OVERCOMING
SILENCE - WOMEN'S
VOICES IN THE ABUSE
CRISIS EVENT.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Opening Speaker - Professor Cettina Militello	pg 06
Part 1: Voices of Truth - Stories of Strength and Survival	
Barbara Dorris	pg 14
Doris Wagner	pg 18
Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear	pg 22
Part 2: Voices of Truth - The Silence of the Church Speaks Volumes	
Robert Mickens — Moderator, Editor of La Croix International	
Mary Hallay-Witte — Director of the Office for Child Protection. Hamburg, Germany	
Virginia Saldanha — Secretary of the Indian Women Theologians Forum	
Barbara Dorris — Survivor, Former Executive Director SNAP	
Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear — Survivor and Theologian	
Closing Remarks - Chantal Götz	pg 60
Why is No One Speaking Up? - Professor Hildegund Keul	pg 64

THE MOST
POWERFUL
VOICE IS
NOT ALWAYS
THE BOLDEST
OR THE
LOUDEST.
IT'S THE ONE
THAT SPEAKS
THE TRUTH.

OUR VISION:

A prophetic Catholic Church where women's voices count, participate and lead on equal footing with men.

OUR MISSION:

To empower and advocate for women's leadership in the Catholic Church

OUR VALUES:

Inclusive: We want to include and hear women's diverse voices and bring them to the forefront

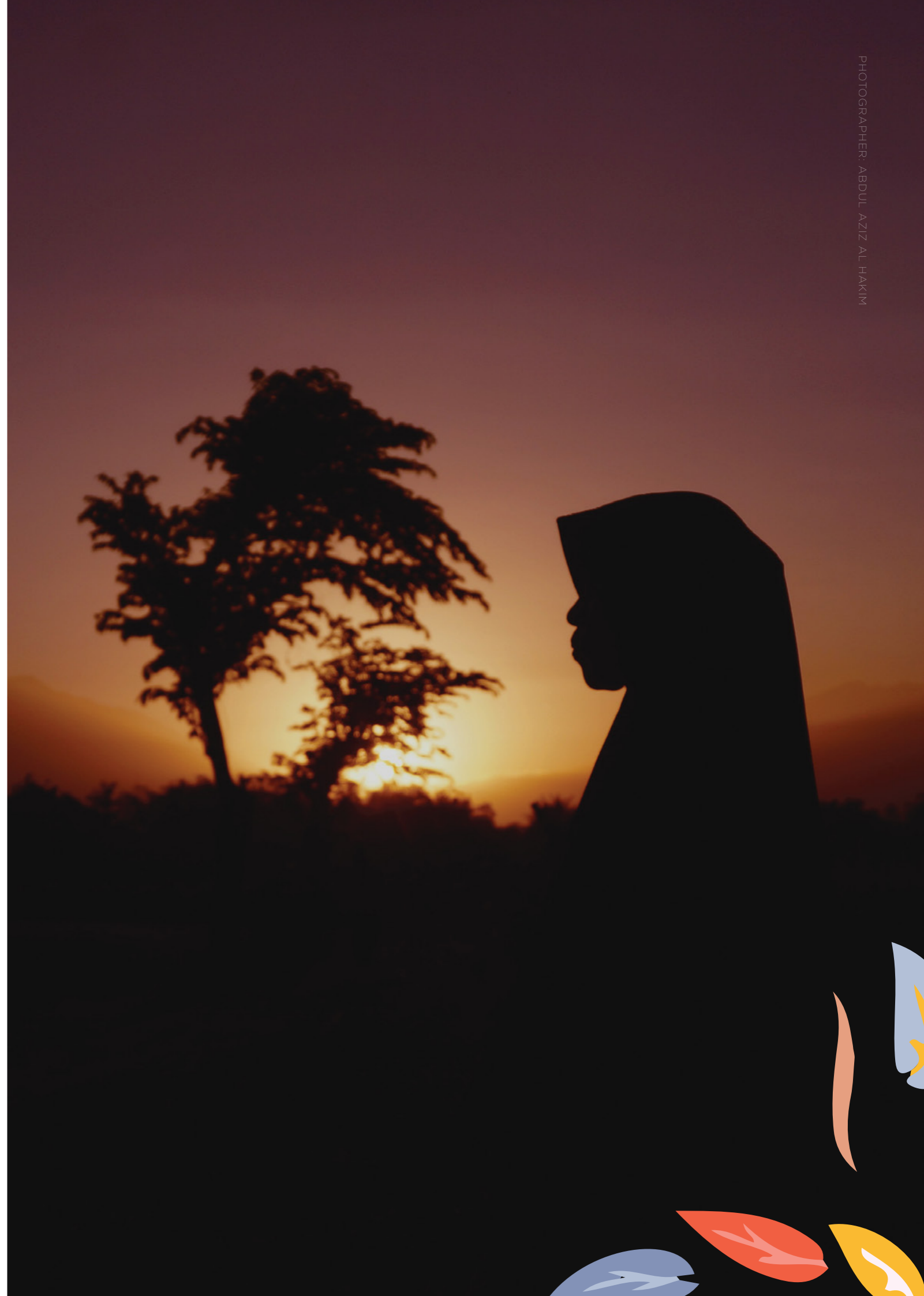
Honest: We seek open and honest dialogue on an issue where varied opinions exist

Respectful: We are respectful of all people and seek constructive solutions

Unapologetic: We are unapologetic about our vision and mission

Innovative/ Bold: We believe women are a solution to the many problems the Catholic Church is facing in a 21st century world

Faithful: We are women and men of faith



OPENING SPEAKER

PROFESSOR CETTINA MILITELLO

Associate Professor at the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Liturgy

It is a great honour for me, to start this meeting about violence against women inside the Church. Most surely, I'd prefer that similar meetings didn't exist, and that men and women of the Church with a common denominator in their statement of faith, and the ideals of praise and mutual assistance, lived in gratifying mutuality, bearing to the world the witness of the joy and beauty of the Gospel.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. Same as in the society in which we live - and there is no great difference moving from one longitude or latitude to another, or living in different cultures, even the Church has experienced behaviours and events, that are completely opposite to that principle of brotherhood and sisterhood that characterised the first Catholic communities.

Even the Church has experienced violence and, unfortunately, in many forms violence against children has rightly and sadly come to the world fore, but to the unspeakable evil of pedophilia, we must add the connected evil of violence against women. This is a topic which we need to bravely break the silence.

What generates violence?

Always and only the delirium of omnipotence. The idea that I am the most important human being of the world and that I have the right to manipulate as I wish the other people that cross my path. Real social hierarchies or false ideological hierarchies lead me to consider the other not as a person, that is equal to me, but rather as a defective subject (or object), thus subordinate to me.

VIOLENCE IS NOT INFLUENCED BY GENDER, BECAUSE IT CAN BE

PERPETRATED BOTH BY MEN AND BY WOMEN. AND THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLE IS THE SAME; I HAVE A POWER AND I WILL WIELD IT.

The other, both if male or female, is just an object, that I can command without taking it into consideration, apart from when the act of owning, humiliating and violating it translates in the utmost gratification of my ego.

Therefore, violence against women goes hand in hand with the violence that women themselves inflict on other women. And, unfortunately, this phenomenon is part of the relational tissue of patriarchy, a social ideology and structure that still acts as the only cultural horizon of many women and men and is at the very basis of sexual violence in all its forms.

The history of violence against women has been described many times. And the single events and facets of this phenomenon have been the main subject of innumerable studies. In the Western culture, the extreme form of violence, i.e. femicide, surely derives from the incapacity of men to abandon patriarchal values and to define their identity otherwise, thus accepting the birth of a new women's subjectivity and awareness. Femicide is the final, wicked consequence of other forms of violence, rape committed in war, rape aimed at a consequent marriage, rape as violation of an integrity that, preventing women from marrying, sadly leads them to prostitution.

However, the violence about which we are going to talk today is not only part of men's misuse of power or of the Western cultural evolution.

In fact, today we want to speak out loud and denounce a most peculiar kind of violence: that perpetrated against women by men, who work or are protected by the ecclesiastical structures and institutions. We opened a new Pandora's box. One of the root causes of this phenomenon is the special presumption of some religious men, that feel and are considered as representatives of a "sacred" power. For this reason, they believe to be above those laws that still determine the political, economic and family exercise of power, though sometimes hypocritically.

Furthermore, these men commit acts of violence against human beings that are not part of clergy, and are thus considered as passive and subordinate, being recipient and not co-protagonist of the power of the clergy. This phenomenon affects not only lay women, but also women religious; and it eventually involves all women, as the last ring of a chain that, hierarchically speaking, puts them on the lowest step of all social ladders. For these men, who are celibate, but not from choice, women embody an instinct, which they are obliged to suffocate and in front of which they develop anger and dyscrasia. It is very easy to identify women with those archaic prejudices, through which they had been associated with Eve, with the woman due to whom men entered the world of sin and death. The natural instinct of these men, body repressed by the choice they were imposed to make, transforms into ideological persecution, urgent need to eliminate women from others' and their life.





PHOTOGRAPHER: MICHAEL D. BECKWITH

In this sense, sexual violence is a special case, because it violates the deepest privacy of a person and reverses the value of sexuality that, in God's plan, is not an obstacle, but rather a gift, request and necessity of otherness. The clergyman that surrenders to the alleged provocation of women towards his life ideal, does nothing more than humiliate them, wounding them in the very characteristics that make them human. The testimonies we are going to listen to, highlights a major situation that has allowed abuse to flourish. What is even more terrible is that, when abusing women, clergymen believe to be just implementing one of their "duties".

The sacredness in which they feel rich and conversely, the socio-political and cultural weakness of women, often entrusted to their

care, make violence more likely. Most of the times, when talking with priests, women find themselves in a condition of frailty. The confession, the spiritual direction, and the hierarchical structure of roles lead them to show their soul, their expectations, their disappointments and their problems; thus, they reveal their weak point. And it is this disclosure that leads to the abuse, often culturally supported by a patriarchal society. It is certainly easier to abuse a woman, enslaved by the culture she lives in; slave of her father or brother, and consequently not allowed to live, nor choose, an autonomous and free life. It is easier to abuse a wife or a daughter upon whom, from a cultural perspective, male relatives have right of life or death.

In these and other cultures, lay and religious women are easy prey of a predator that physically and morally subject them, blackmailing and silencing them. And let me say that the condition of religious women is even more tragic. Compared to lay women, they are more likely to be abused, because their religious formation put the spiritual father, the chaplain, the counsellor or head of their community on top of their hierarchical ladder; consequently, defying these men's deceitful and persistent advances becomes growingly hard. Not to mention the deceit, the hypocritical flattery with which, slowly and inexorably, these predators engulf and catch their prey. Moreover, those women that denounce the abuse suffered, will most of the time not be believed.

AS A RESULT, ABUSED WOMEN EXPERIENCE ALSO SHAME, SELF-BLAME, AS IF THEY HAD BEEN TEMPTRESSES, RATHER THAN VICTIMS.

The fact that religious and lay women decided to finally break the silence and start speaking out is undoubtedly a great turning point. A new awareness pushes them to rebel and to rebuild their lives. Thus, denouncing and taking action, they pave the way for the final elimination of violence, against them and against those women that, in the future, could be abused as well. However, I want to ask a question to the ecclesiastical community: When will the education path

of the clergy change? When will women really enter the Church, without "gender" discriminations? When will the construction site of the Ministration open for women?

If violence is linked to power and, as far as our topic is concerned, to "sacred power", what we should urgently reflect upon is the real meaning of this word. What does "sacred" mean? Does it still make sense to use this adjective? Shouldn't "holy" be the proper adjective of the Christian community, whose holiness derives from the gift of grace? Are we sure, biblically speaking, that "power" concerns only some, and not all people? Don't the *exousia*, the *potestas*, characterise all baptised people? Haven't we all been conformed with Christ and marked by His Spirit? Shouldn't we all commit ourselves to correctly exercise this power, rather than declaring it our exclusive prerogative? Why do some people want to transform a "duty", a task, in an absolute power that differentiates them from the whole Christian community?

In order to change the concept of power, not will upon the other people, but *diakonia*, collaboration, we also need to change our mindset, start education paths that firstly abandon the distinction between clerics, religious and lay people and secondly focus on the people of God, wholly representative of a royal priesthood, a chosen race and a holy nation.

The Church will not change, there will not be any reform of the Church – and yet, even though that would

be extremely urgent, if the people of God, basing on the instructions of the Second Vatican Council, will not be recognised as an active subject, bearer of gifts and, above all, bearer of the supernatural sense of faith. A sympathetic and synod-based Church, an inclusive Church will be able to exorcise and eliminate violence in all its forms, since it will be supported by the awareness of our common, Christian path and by common ideals.

A Church of men and women, that will be bearers of prophecy and able to analyse the signs of the times, taking consequent action. A Church in which women are considered as first-class citizens, first-class Christians and therefore destined to their own charismas, same as men. The Spirit, in fact, does not give its gifts on a gender basis. To all men and to all women it gives a peculiar gift, necessary for the development of the community. Distinguishing between male and female charismas and ministrations, considering them essentially different, means to persistently defend men's privileges and power.

The women's theological research, enabled by the Second Vatican Council, also allowed them to acquire the necessary tools, to nullify this and other similar statements. In fact, the core of the problem does not lie in the defence of truths of faith, but rather in the final definition of an organisation, which has undergone a long cultural development and whose historical characteristics have been dogmatised.

AN INCLUSIVE CHURCH WILL BE ABLE TO EXORCISE AND ELIMINATE VIOLENCE IN ALL ITS FORMS.

— DORIS WAGNER

And since the sexual identity is a gift itself, the education paths of the people of God shall define flesh as means for salvation (*caro salutis cardo*), as gift, noble condition that shall be experienced without obstacles and humiliations, being convinced of its being the ultimate gift which God has given to every human being. Our sexual identity defines us in our limits, but it also enables us to exist, to dialogue, to meet one another in the sublime complexity of forms that, as Christians, we cannot soil, violate or let be offended and humiliated. Therefore, we don't need hatred or prejudice, but sympathy, empathy for our body and for other human beings. Except for those single, genuine and rare charismas, let us all abandon those norms that, imposing celibacy, can potentially create monsters.


Yes, I am deeply convinced about that. A hierarchical and sexist Church is the one that makes men violent and allows violence. And let me say, concluding my speech, that this definition should include not only sexual violence, but all kinds of violence, together with that delirium of omnipotence that frustrates the Commandments and replaces the so-called "man of God" with God Himself; it is that delirium that makes men idolatrous of themselves and exempts them from their responsibility towards past and future generations, transforming them into murders, rapists, thieves, false witnesses, always ferociously envious of the others' property.

WE NEED TO BREAK THIS VICIOUS CIRCLE. WE NEED TO BREAK THE SILENCE.

We need to be honest, as we have been taught by the Gospel. Certainly, it is not easy. But denouncing clericalism, careerism, the inequality between clergymen and laymen, in the end, will bear its fruit. Pope Francis has denounced this phenomenon and he keeps on doing it; obviously, this is one of the reasons why the opposition against him and his office is constantly increasing. We would certainly like him to take positive and unambiguous actions. We would like him to publicly condemn and denounce violence against women, an awful crime against the whole community, perpetrated by "men of the Church", maybe also with the silent consensus of brainwashed and inadequate laymen.

The Church of the future will be characterised by synod-based brotherhood and sisterhood or, simply, it will not exist. There is no other alternative.

Thanks to the women, to all women, that have the courage to denounce the abuse they suffered. Their painful testimony shows that the Spirit wants this situation to change and the Church, contemporarily holy and sinner, to equal in beauty the light it has been given by its Lord. Thank you.



**WE WON'T
ALLOW GENDER
INEQUALITY TO
UNDERMINE THE
LONGEVITY OF
THE CHURCH.**



PART 1

VOICES OF TRUTH STORIES OF STRENGTH AND SURVIVAL

BARBARA DORRIS

Survivor and Former Executive Director, SNAP

When the Boston Globe broke the award winning story of the abuse and cover-up by church officials the survivor movement was comprised of a few hundred members communicating mostly by snail mail and at an occasional gathering.

In 2002 all that changed. We at SNAP could not answer the phones fast enough, as soon as we cleared the voicemail it would fill up again. Emails, letters, recordings, photos were pouring in. We went from overwhelmed to completely buried. How did I get involved? I was a good Catholic, very involved in my parish, my six kids were attending the parish grade school and I was the physical education teacher.

I lived in the parish where I grew up, I attended the same school my children were attending and where I taught. My husband jokes that I have only moved three blocks my entire life. All my grandparents were immigrants, two from Italy and two from Ireland, so you understand how devoutly I was raised. I went to mass every morning, the church

was the centre of our lives, it was our calendar and our social life. Lent to easter to novenas, baptisms, first communions, midnight mass, may crownings.

One day Father Lodes, a priest in our parish and my best friend's uncle called my mom and asked her to send me to church to help him. You can imagine how proud my mother was to have her daughter chosen to be a special helper. She told me to put on my best dress and Mary Janes and go to father. I was a tomboy and hated the Mary Janes. I decided I would wear my favorite brown shoes because they matched the trim on my dress. I snuck out the back door and went to the church.

FATHER TOLD ME HE HAD BEEN SENT BY GOD TO SAVE MY SOUL BECAUSE I WAS AN EVIL CHILD. HE RAPED ME THAT DAY AND I BELIEVED THAT RAPE WAS THE PUNISHMENT FOR WEARING THE BROWN SHOES. I WAS SIX.

I had no idea what he had done to me and I had no words to describe what had happened. I knew it hurt and I knew I did not want my parents to find out how bad I was, because he made me think I was evil. If I had been forced to tell someone what had happened, I would have said, "Father jumped up and down on me". I did not know the word rape and had no idea what "sex" was.

The abuse went on for seven years. Father Lodes was raping and sodomizing me and others

on a regular basis and as we got a little older, he would invite other priests over to abuse us. I was made to believe the abuse was my fault, that I was an evil child. I did everything in my power to keep my parents from finding out. I did everything in my power to make the abuse stop. I tried to be good but could never be good enough. I cut off all my hair, so I would look like a boy because it didn't happen to boys, only girls. There was no place I was safe. He would have the nuns send me from school to his bedroom, he would take me out of church, he would call my mother and she would send me to him right away. I spent my childhood trying to find a safe place.

Like all predators Father Lodes made me complicit in his crimes. In some cases, the predator gives the kids alcohol or drugs or shows them porn. The kids know this is illegal, so they believe that everything that happens is their fault. Father Lodes told me that if I prayed with a pure heart the rapes would not hurt, because God would not let an innocent child be punished. Since it hurt, that was the proof I was an evil child.

I WAS VERY YOUNG WHEN THE ABUSE STARTED, SO ONLY THE BISHOPS HAVE ACCUSED ME OF BEING A SEXUAL TEMPTRESS. ALL TOO OFTEN OLDER KIDS ARE ACCUSED OF TEMPTING THE PRIEST, ESPECIALLY THE GIRLS.

The crimes are referred to as a 'relationship' or 'an affair' rather than as a sexual assault.

Father Lodes never showed me any affection, so there was no confusion that he loved me or that I was special, so there were no feelings to sort out. Many survivors have good and bad memories with their predators.

As an adult I realised that people must have known about Father Lodes' crimes. The rectory had a cook, a secretary, a house keeper and other priests. What did they think he was doing with a child in his bedroom? Why did they remain silent? As crazy as this sounds it was almost a relief when he was assaulting me because I knew that for the next day or two, I would be safe.

In 1991 a young priest, Father Rothchild was assigned to our parish. I was the gym teacher at the school. He came to the playground every morning, wanted to know the kids' names, all about their families, he played with them and gave them treats. He came to the physical education classes and joined in the games. After a few months the older kids began saying, "Don't let him play", "We don't want him on our team", "Make him go away", a very odd reaction to a priest who wanted to be their friend. One afternoon I was walking home with the older kids and asked them why they did not like Father. The first boy said because he always asks you who is kissing who and who loves who, the second boy said he is always at the Gannon's house, a family with three little girls and the girl said because he always touches you.

I had noticed he had favorites, he liked little girls, girls who were 4, 5, 6 years old. He was always hugging the kids in

ways that made me feel uneasy. I had seen him with a little girl on his lap, all this made me so uncomfortable, but I never said or did anything about it. After talking with the older kids, I began to watch him more carefully.

One afternoon in class I saw him pick up a little girl and fondle her right in front of me. He made no attempt to hide it. When I went toward him to get the little girl, he put her down and ran away.

Being a good Catholic, I went to my pastor rather than calling the police, a huge mistake. I was assured by church officials he would be gone by morning; the child would be helped, and Father Rothchild would get treatment and be kept away from kids. Of course none of this happened, he was back on the playground the next morning. No one offered to help the kids and I was told to watch him and report back if he molested another child.

THUS BEGAN MY EDUCATION ON THE COVER-UP BY CHURCH OFFICIALS. ALMOST EVERYTHING THEY TOLD ME WAS A LIE.

They never denied he was abusing the kids, the Chancellor simply said, "You know Barb, he is only fondling, and the kids are too young to testify in court." That comment made me realise they had played this game many times before and were not going to help. The final straw came from a priest who was a friend. I told him about catching Father Rothchild with little girls and he said "Girls? It has always been little boys."

I tried calling the police and the child protection agency. All would go well until I would say he was a Catholic priest, then it would be - "Call back tomorrow, call my superior." During this time the "secret" got out in the parish, people took sides, but two other adults came forward and said they too had caught him with little girls but had never said anything.

One Sunday morning I went with two neighbours and a man from SNAP to the parish where Father Rothchild was working. We stood on the sidewalk and passed out leaflets to the people as they left mass. The leaflet had information about predator priests, what to do and what to watch out for. I used my name and gave out my home phone number. I have never been so scared in my life. I had no idea what would happen; Would we be arrested? Would people

come out and yell at us? Would someone try to beat us up? Would they come after my family? My kids? Some people took the leaflet and walked away. Some read them, balled them up and threw them at us and some even refused to take them. A church official called the police but we had broken no laws and so they just watched us.

During the next weeks I got phone calls from parishioners wanting to know why we had done this, some wanted to know about the abuse, some wanted to yell at me. I was still scared, but I had done something, I had taken action, I was no longer following the church rules.

The pope is an absolute monarch, he doesn't need legislation, he doesn't need the courts to make changes. He could begin today to remove and name the complicit church officials, those that enable, shield and protect predators. Remove them publicly and reveal the part they played. He could take their job, their titles, their salaries and then he could turn over all the documents to local law enforcement. He could take the documents from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, which has collected abuse documents for decades, turn them over to the local law enforcement. He could instruct the bishops to abide by the laws of the land. He could instruct the bishops to stop internal investigations.

I think language is incredibly powerful and needs to be used carefully when talking about abuse. These are not relationships, they are not affairs, boundary violations, cultural differences, inappropriate conduct, misunderstandings. Let's call it what it is, this is sexual violence.

THE POPE HAS CHOSEN NOT TO TAKE ACTION.

Would we allow any other government, organisation or institution to internally investigate criminal behaviour, to hold secret trials, to pick their own punishment. Would we allow corporate policies to supersede the laws of our land? I don't think so.

In the past it's been acceptable to own slaves, to bind women's feet. Women couldn't vote or own property, smoking was glamorous. All that has changed and we must add sexual violence to that list.

THANK YOU.



DORIS WAGNER

Survivor, Theologian and Author

And still, I fancied that this was a grace, a spiritual privilege, the Dark Night of the Soul or something – but it was not. It was purely and simply the consequence of the spiritual abuse I suffered at the hands of my superiors. In hindsight this seems so obvious, but at that moment, I was unable to grasp this, and so, the abuse went on.

Five years after I had joined religious life and only some months after I had solemnly professed vows here in Rome, the male superior of the house came into my room and raped me. When he came in and began to undress me, the only thing I was able to do or say was: “You are not allowed to do this.” Which obviously did not help at all and instantly I knew, whomever I would speak to about this, would blame me – not him. So I kept silent. I got up the next morning, went into the chapel, prayed, went to work in the kitchen, never talked to anybody and always smiled, as I had been told to do.

For two entire years I kept silent. But it remained not the only sexual abuse I suffered. There was another leading member of the community who approached me, a priest working to this day as capufficio at the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. As a first step he had asked my superior to be appointed as my confessor. And then he used the confessional for grooming. He told me how much he liked me and

how he knew that I liked him and that even though we were not allowed to marry there would be other ways. At some point he tried to hold me and kiss me and I simply panicked and ran out of the confessional. When I asked my superior if I could have another confessor she insisted that I tell her exactly why and when I told her, I was extremely relieved she did not blame me. Instead she tried to excuse him by saying that she knew he had a certain weakness for women and that we kind of needed to put up with this. At least I did not have to go to him for confession any more.

FINALLY, IN 2010, WHEN THERE WERE ALL THOSE HEADLINES ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE CHURCH, I REALISED THAT UNLESS VICTIMS SPEAK OUT, THE ABUSE WILL GO ON.

I took a deep breath, pulled myself together, or rather what was left of myself, which was not much and went up to my superior. When I told her I had been raped by the male superior of the house, she became furious. She was jumping to her feet, shouting at me, screaming. It was very clear that in her eyes I had committed a terrible crime. Her first question; Did you use contraceptives? She pretended not to understand that I was actually speaking of rape, she did not want to understand, she did not ask any more questions, but she forgave me.

Which meant in the end my superiors were not considering any consequences at all. Neither concerning me nor concerning my perpetrator. He is to this day a member of the community, a priest, living in a house together with many young Sisters. When I left the community in 2011, I still thought, I was the only nun who had ever been raped by a priest, because I had never heard of similar incidents before.

Only when I came across a study by Chibnall, Duckro and Wolf — which suggests that approximately 30 percent of religious women experience sexual abuse — did I realise there is a bigger picture to what I had gone through. Still, I was not sure to what extent the Roman Curia was aware of these facts, until I discovered an article in the New York Times from 2001. It contains extensive quotes from reports that had been sent to Rome by Maura

O'Donohue in the early 1990s. She reports horrible assaults and stories that religious sisters on all continents had undergone from Brazil to the Philippines, from Zimbabwe to Ireland.

They contain stories of rape, pregnancies, forced abortions and even deaths. O'Donohue gives one example of a priest who had brought a sister for an abortion. She died during the procedure and the Priest officiated at the Requiem Mass. I wonder what has become of that priest. I find the idea of him never being challenged for his deeds, walking free and living a good life into his old days, quite unbearable. Just as I find the idea unbearable that had the Roman Curia reacted appropriately to those cases that were known to them in the 1990s, I might never have been raped in 2008. Why don't the Roman Curia act appropriately? Why don't they do what they ought to do?

TO ME IT BECOMES VERY CLEAR THAT THE MAIN ISSUE RESPONSIBLE FOR MY PERSONAL SUFFERING IS THE MONARCHICAL POWER STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH.

It is not merely the fact that women are excluded from the hierarchy, it is not just “clericalism”, it is the simple yet serious fact that there is no proper separation of powers inside the Church. There is no independent justice system, there is no one you can appeal to when Canon Law is violated in your case and the Roman Curia is not interested to enforce it. That's a problem.

But today it is no use for us to ask ourselves what they should have done. Let me just say this one thing, their lack of action makes it very clear that they are not acting in the interest of the Church, quite the contrary.

What we have to ask ourselves is what can we do? What I can do is to tell my story. This is why I'm here today. This is why I have written my book. I want no young sister who has gone through what I have gone through to think she is the only one. I don't want her to think she is to blame. But most of all, I want any victim that decides to speak up to know they are not alone. When they speak up we are all standing with her. Finally, to any sister being in that situation, I would like to give this advice.

I JOINED RELIGIOUS LIFE WHEN I WAS 19. AT THAT TIME I WAS FOLLOWING AN IDEAL, THE IDEAL OF UTMOST SELFLESSNESS, OF UNCONDITIONED LOVE AND SELF-GIVING. I WAS READY TO FOLLOW CHRIST, WHEREVER HE WOULD LEAD ME.

So when my superiors told me the way to perfection and to true love of God consisted in obeying orders even when I did not understand them, when they told me not to read books, not to speak with my fellow sisters about personal matters, not to contact my family without permission, when they told me not to ask any questions about my future, when they told me to always smile, I trusted them. And it destroyed me. I lost my self confidence, I became apathetic, insecure and despite the fake smile on my lips I had tears running all over my face whenever I was alone for a minute.

UNLESS VICTIMS **SPEAK OUT,** THE ABUSE WILL GO ON.

— DORIS WAGNER

PHOTOGRAPHER: NICK OWUOR ASTRO

First of all, you are a precious, lovable person. You have not deserved that life. That's not what God wanted for you, to be cut off from family and friends, to be exploited, humiliated, isolated - that's not what God wanted for you. God wanted you to be free, to develop your talents, to live a happy life.

Secondly, before you speak out, find an ally, somebody you can speak to, somebody you can share your thoughts with and who will help you and give you strength to speak and get justice done.

Thirdly, do not feel obliged to remain silent and to go on suffering because of the vow of obedience or the ideal of selflessness or the image of Christ crucified.

When someone tells you that you have to suffer, don't believe them, because that's not true. Remember always that Christ has died for us, not to make us suffer, but he has died for us to set us free.

THANK YOU.



DR ROCIO FIGUEROA ALVEAR

Survivor, Theologian and Lecturer



I come from Peru from a Catholic middle-class family in Lima. My school was run by nuns. I felt God's calling when I was a young girl and it urged me to do something for the world. When I was 15 years old, I came across Sodalicio, a very conservative Catholic movement in Peru that was catching the attention of Lima's high and middle-class young people. My brother and my friends were participating in different activities and so I joined them.

Sodalicio is a lay movement with a few priests but it is led by lay consecrated men from different countries. The Peruvian, Luis Fernando Figari founded it in 1971. When I joined in 1983 there were no consecrated women at all, just men.

Germán Doig, Sodalicio's vicar became my spiritual director. After a few months of gaining my trust he asked me, and some of the young men, to bring our sports gear to study some yoga. After some group sessions he moved into personal sessions, one on one, just him and me. He taught me 'special exercises' that he said would help me develop self-mastery and give me control over my sexuality. I was fifteen, naïve and had no prior sexual experience. These exercises gradually became more intimate and more controlling. I told no one about this because I had no words to describe it. What I felt during these exercise sessions must be my fault. He was good, I was evil.

After these sessions I just cried at home. I felt guilty and disorientated.

**HE WAS MY SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR,
MY SPIRITUAL FATHER AND FRIEND,
SO IN MY MIND HE COULD DO
NO WRONG. I BLAMED MYSELF.**

After months, I became ill and I asked him to stop because I knew that something was not right. He assured me that he would never do something like that again, and because of my protest he would change. I believed him, and I left the event in the past, but its consequences

never left me. I never spoke about this experience. I considered that I was the problem and I had no label for what had been done to me, but how I felt about myself and how I could relate to others was affected.

When I was 18 years old, five friends and I decided to consecrate our lives and so we began the feminine branch of Sodalicio. We found a little house near the airport in a very poor area in Peru. We were happy with the project, giving our lives to God, helping people and working for the kingdom of God. During those first four years the founder did not visit us. We were treated terribly by the male community. The founder was a misogynist who continuously said that women were less intelligent, and only wanted us to assist with promoting the vocations of the male branch.

Time passed, and many girls joined us. I became the superior of the community and when the founder saw that we were growing he decided to get involved in our daily lives. I had to obey him and give account of everything we did. Little by little, I became more critical of how women were treated in the community. I began to complain more to the leaders of the men's branch about our position, we never had any true leadership in the movement, we were treated like second-class citizens and we worked on their projects and in their schools without receiving the economic benefits that they did.

Because I had become a rebellious voice in Sodalicio, the founder and the vicar decided to move me out of Lima and sent me to create a new foundation in Rome. Rome was the beginning of my liberation. Rome opened my horizons and I became even more conscious of the misogynist culture within Sodalicio. I concluded that the feminine group had to find its independence.

I began to encourage the formation of female communities in areas where there were no male communities of Sodalicio.



In 2002 the general vicar, Germán Doig, the one who had mistreated me, died. He had a great reputation for holiness within the community of Sodalicio. After some years, a very good priest friend of mine in Rome asked me why I was so defensive with men. Did someone hurt you? He asked. His kindness and perception lifted the veil of silence and enabled me to tell him my story. When I told him what I had experienced when I was a very young girl, he said to me: What happened to you was sexual abuse.

FOR THE FIRST TIME I REALISED THAT I WAS A VICTIM AND I WAS GIVEN THE CORRECT WORDS TO DESCRIBE WHAT HAD BEEN DONE TO ME.

I began a long path to healing, healing my feelings of betrayal, low self-esteem and guilt.

Soon after this, the founder asked me to help him work on the cause of the Germán Doig's beatification. I still had the memory of what had happened in my adolescence. This generated doubts in me about his sanctity. I went to an old Jesuit priest and he told me that it could be that Germán Doig had changed and that I had to find out if that was the case or not. So, I started helping in the process of his beatification. In 2006, a friend and I discovered a second victim of Doig. In 2008, after two years we discovered a third victim. Doig had not changed. Doig was not just an abuser, he was a serial abuser all his life. We were shocked. I decided to inform the founder that we should cease attempting to beatify Germán Doig. He was not a saint but rather an abuser. During that meeting with Sodalicio's founder, I was accused of instigating a plot against Sodalicio, of being a rebel, a seducer and a liar. He said to me, "This conversation never happened. I forbid you to speak with anyone." I replied that he would never have the support of the women's branch and if he wanted to build Sodalicio on a lie, everything would collapse. From that confrontation his attitude to me turned 180 degrees. From being a person close to him, someone whom he valued, he became distant, aggressive and began to try to destroy my reputation in every way.

The very next day after the meeting I became very ill and depressed. I had an intuition that Figari, the founder, was also involved in abuse.

Soon after I discovered a tumour in my uterus. My sister, knowing that I was ill, told me to come to Lima to be close to my family and be seen by our doctors. However, the founder forbade me to go to Lima because he was afraid that I would speak and tell others what I had discovered.

Figari began to discredit me. He began to spread the word that I had psychological problems. In 2009 he forced me to resign from my position in the Vatican where I was in charge of the women's section at the Pontifical Council for Laity. I told the Cardinal who was my boss, what had happened to me and he did nothing. I will never forget what he said, "You have two possibilities, either you leave the community, or you become a silent soldier." I realised that I would never have the Vatican's support.

I HAD SPOKEN THE TRUTH TO POWER AND THOSE IN POWER DECIDED TO SILENCE ME AGAIN.

Luis Fernando Figari made sure that I could do nothing for three years. I feel now that this was my second abuse. He isolated me from the community, from all of Sodalicio. He made sure that I could not work or do any other activity, it was a means of control and humiliation. I decided that I would not give up or leave the community until I discovered the truth. I began an internal investigation that took me six years in total and I discovered more victims and four perpetrators in total. With all this information, in 2010, I went to the new vicar of Sodalicio and demanded he tell Figari to quit as superior because he was covering up the crimes of Doig and continuing the cause for his beatification. At the same time, I asked him to investigate the founder. He assured me that Figari was innocent of any wrongdoing.

In December 2010, I made contact with a journalist and ex-member of Sodalicio, Pedro Salinas. He began helping me investigate. The same month he publicised Doig's crimes and I began an internal investigation against the founder himself. The trail of victims led all the way to the top. Four of the top leaders of Sodalicio had been abusers.

I helped the victims to present their accusations to the ecclesiastical court in Lima and also to the Vatican. I didn't have the support of my community. They were scared.





PHOTOGRAPHER: ABDUL AZIZ AL HAKIM

During this time, I developed a relationship of trust with the victims. The Vatican and the Church in Lima never responded to our accusations. When I finished helping the victims and I saw that the community didn't want to investigate the founder, I left the community in 2012. It was a huge blow emotionally for me, one that I am still recovering from.

In 2015, after five years of investigation, Pedro Salinas published his book, *Half Soldiers Half Monks*, about Sodalicio. It created a huge impact in Peru.

CURRENTLY, SODALICIO HAS RECOGNISED 66 VICTIMS AND SET ASIDE A FUND OF NEARLY \$4 MILLION FOR REPARATIONS.

The founder now lives in Rome and he has been asked by the Vatican not to return to Peru, where he would be imprisoned and to live a life of prayer.

I was silent as a teenager. I had no words for my experience, I still find it enormously difficult to speak about it. When I discovered that I was not the only victim, I had to talk. I spoke for six years, to my authorities, to the Vatican, using every channel available to me and the only response was silence.

Finally, in 2015 I went public on television and many victims heard what I had to say and were enabled to speak. Their stories came pouring forth and the silence was demolished. In Peru the politicians and the courts started investigating. The processes of the justice system are still being worked through.

I now work as a lecturer in theology in New Zealand and I am committed to assisting victims of sexual abuse. Since 2016 I have researched theological and pastoral responses to the sexual abuse crisis and I am convinced that the victims themselves are the prophetic voices that will help in the renewal of our Church. One of the lessons that I have learned is that it is very difficult to be a victim as a woman. Machismo also exists within this crisis of sexual abuse. If it is an abuse of an adult man against a minor young woman, they describe it as an event in which: "She seduced him" or "They were lovers". Women are constantly re-victimised. Sexual abuse is not about gender.

WE ARE BREAKING THE SILENCE.

Breaking the silence creates a culture in which the darkness can be revealed through the light of the truth. When our words are full of truth they are able to destroy the lies of the powerful. We need to be women of the Word, we need women of truth and we need to **break the silence**.

WE NEED
WOMEN OF
TRUTH AND
WE NEED
TO **BREAK**
THE SILENCE.

— DR ROCIO FIGUEROA ALVEAR



PART 2
THE SILENCE OF THE CHURCH SPEAKS VOLUMES PANEL MEMBERS



ROBERT MICKENS

Moderator, Editor of La Croix International

Robert Mickens is a Rome-based journalist who has been reporting and commenting on the Vatican and the Catholic Church for the past three decades. He is currently editor of La Croix International, an online English version of the eminent French Catholic daily La Croix. He was founding editor of Global Pulse Magazine, launched in 2014 by the Union of Catholic Asian News (UCAN) in collaboration with La Croix and Commonweal.

He writes the popular "Letter from Rome" each week, which he produced for over a decade as Rome correspondent for the international Catholic paper, The Tablet. He also worked eleven years (1989-2000) at Vatican Radio as a journalist, producer and on-air presenter. And he has long been a Vatican-affairs analyst for the BBC in the United Kingdom, ABC in Australia and National Public Radio (NPR) in the United States, as well as an occasional columnist for National Catholic Reporter.

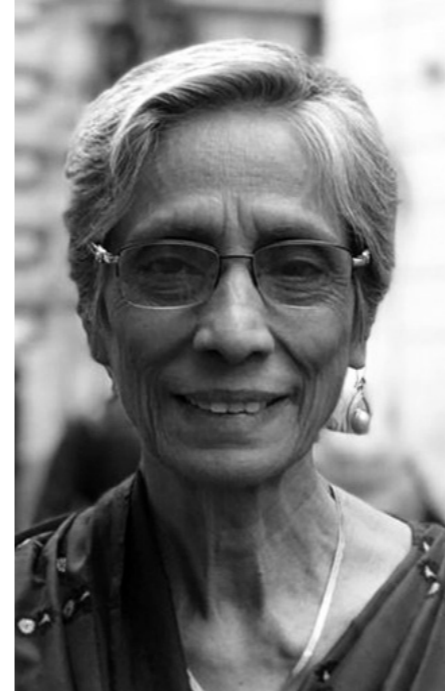


MARY HALLAY-WITTE

Director of the Office for Child Protection

Mary Hallay-Witte is a certified religious pedagogue, systemic counsellor for singles, couples and families (DGSF).

She has worked in different positions in the Archdiocese of Hamburg. Since 2010 she has worked as Director of the Office for Child Protection and was part of the process of the reappraisal of the sexual abuse scandal within the Catholic Church in Germany. She is a member of the Research Group for Vulnerability, Security and Resilients at the University of Wurzburg, led by Prof Dr H Keul, and is married with two wonderful daughters. In her Irish family on her mother's side, women have suffered sexual abuse in the Church.



VIRGINIA SALDANHA

Secretary of the Indian Women Theologians Forum

Virginia Saldanha has had extensive experience working in the Catholic Church including: being an Executive Council member of Pax Christi International; Board Member of UCANews; the Executive Secretary of the Women's Desk of the Archdiocese of Bombay, and of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Office of Laity, Family & Women.

She began to engage with the issue of sex abuse of women in the Church from 1998 onwards as Executive Secretary of the CBCI Commission for Women. Through this time victims of clergy sex abuse approached her with their stories, asking for help to address the issue. Virginia decided to tackle the issue head on, first locally in Mumbai and then expanded it to include women across India. She worked on three consultations on gender relations in the Church from 2010 to 2013 and worked with a team on preparing the policy for the Catholic Church in India on the 'sexual abuse of vulnerable persons'.



BARBARA DORRIS

Former Executive Director SNAP

Barbara Dorris spent the past sixteen years working with leaders around the world as SNAP's (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests) Outreach Director before assuming the role of Executive Director in 2017. She has managed international and national conferences, worked with media, helped to prepare a case to present to the ICC and the UN committee on the Rights of the Child. She has talked with thousands of survivors, trained volunteer leaders and help to start dozens of support groups. In her role as former Executive Director, she guided the organisation into a new era, helping to build strategic partnerships, expanding SNAP's role in exposing institutional corruption in the cover-up of child sexual abuse in institutions.



DR ROCIO FIGUEROA ALVEAR

Survivor and Theologian

Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear is a Peruvian theologian, lecturer in systematic theology at Good Shepherd College in Auckland and an external researcher at the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at Otago University, New Zealand. She has a bachelor's degree and licence in theology from the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Lima and her doctorate in theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. She has previously lectured and worked in Peru, Italy, and Mexico. She worked in the Holy See as head for the women's section in the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

Figueroa's present research focus is theological and pastoral responses for survivors of Church sexual abuse. She has also published on women's studies and reciprocity between men and women and continues to advocate for women's rights in this space.

Robert Mickens: When Voices of Faith asked me if I would moderate this panel discussion, I was really honored. I have covered the Vatican and issues in the Church for a long time. A little bit of *mea culpa*, I don't know if I've given enough attention to this particular issue that we've been talking about today, and some of the moving and painful testimonies that these courageous women shared with us today. I have to say, I'm very moved, and it's changed my thinking. I hope that those of you who are colleagues in the media, that we'll do what we can to make people in the Church, especially the people who are in positions of power, understand the gravity, the seriousness, of this issue.

We talk a lot about the sexual abuse of children, and I think one of the things that was very clear in the days that I spent with these ladies, is that there's an issue that we're not talking enough about, and that's the abuse; physical, spiritual, psychological, sexual abuse of women, especially women religious.

As one of the speakers said earlier, this has been known for a very long time, since the 1990s. National Catholic Reporter did a report on this in the '90s, as did The New York Times. The thinking at the time, as I remember it, was people in positions of authority in the Church said, "Don't make too big of a media spectacle out of this because you know what happens in the Church.

WHEN THE BISHOP OF ROME AND HIS CURIA IS OR ARE EMBARRASSED, THEY RETREAT.

So we can do this behind the scenes and we'd be more productive in getting a solution." To this date, they've done nothing. So with that, I want to welcome our panellists today. Two of them have already given testimonies: Rocio, and Barb Dorris. Mary Hallay-Witte is somebody we've not heard from today. She's from the diocese of Hamburg, in Germany. She's been at the forefront of bringing about public awareness of sexual abuse in the diocese and in Germany. The next guest is Virginia Saldanha, who is from Mumbai, India. She has been involved in the Federation

of Asian Bishops Conferences, she's worked with the Indian Bishops Conference, and she's also a writer for UCAN, and a former board member of Union of Catholic Asian Youths.

Today we are also leaving one seat empty, not because we're waiting for Elijah, but in recognition of those women who cannot or are unable to find the courage and the support to speak about the abuse that they've suffered. Welcome to the panel. Mary, why don't you begin with your introductory remarks.

Mary Hallay-Witte: I've been working for eight years in the Archdiocese of Hamburg to enable women and men to tell their stories, and to prevent children from experiencing violence, and especially sexual abuse, in our schools, in our kindergartens, and in our hospitals. So it's very moving today to see, we're sitting here, we're speaking up. It's a long path.

In September this year, we had the release of a long-term research project on "The Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests, Deacons, and Male Members of Orders in the Domain of the German Bishops Conference." It was presented to the bishops in Germany.

I ask myself today, do you really need research to know that sexual abuse is happening? Don't we just need the testimonies of the women and men who have experienced sexual abuse?

BUT THE RESULTS PAINFULLY SHOW HOW STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE IS AN IMMINENT BASIS AND A BREEDING GROUND WHICH ENABLES THE SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS.

One of the main findings is dealing with clerical power and the associated abuse of power, which works deeply within the structures of the Catholic Church. My personal experience in the reprisal is, institutional repression and dissociation are inherent in all issues of abuse. Employees who are responsible for providing education and protection, and intervention of sexual abuse of children, who seek to disclose this perspective of the countless abused women and men within the Catholic Church, experience isolation and different forms of structural violence. They suddenly become vulnerable themselves in the attempt to disclose structural violence and sexual abuse, but they need to be resilient and able to work with this resistance against disclosing.

Violence occurs in the structures in which people work and suffer. It gives us an idea of what we are dealing with, and I think it might be an important point which needs to be addressed and deferred to discussion. We need to understand what happens. It is more than just discrimination of women or lay people. There is a greater purpose behind it. Clericalism has an effect on ecclesiastical institutions and interactions of all parties involved. Many priests, especially in positions in the higher levels, and the religiously underlined abuse of power, give testimony which accepts violence, tolerates, and does not stop the transfer of accused priests to new positions. They do not comply with state and Church laws. This not only legitimises sexual violence, but also gives us all other forms of violence, its unacceptable and leaks into every tissue of the institution and day-to-day interactions. Sexual abuse can only happen within a Church institution if there is a fundamental breeding ground in which an offender can rely with his manipulative strategies, to initiate and cover up his actions, and where even after disclosure, no protection, sanctions or any other consequences are taken into account.

Instead, further violence is continuously inflicted upon the victims, being considered as troublemakers and being rejected. The re-violation of the victims is accepted, and as part of the strategy that serves to secure power. In this way, structural violence again falls back on the victim. Explicit resilience and resistance is needed here for every victim/survivor, in order to not be victimised again. There are no sanctions in the event of non-compliance with basic rules of human interaction and decency; damaging personal reputation; refusal to work, for example, on the implementation of prevention regulations; open and hidden attacks on individual persons; no sufficient complaint quality and risk management procedures.

All of these things are seemingly considered as normal and acceptable, but they do express structural violence and are the day-to-day symptoms within every Catholic institution. In the overarching context, the systematic exclusion of women from Church leadership positions, defamation and discrimination of women and victims of sexual abuse, isolation of those who disclose, who speak and propose the necessity of Church reforms, is another explicit expression of structural violence.

IF YOU
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PRIEST.

— DR ROCIO FIGUEROA ALVEAR



Change of individual actions does not bring about any fundamental change. Abolishing clericalism and ongoing abuse of clerical power within our Church structures, and addressing necessary reforms, requires a total analysis of institutional barriers of preventing, reporting and prosecuting abuse and the disclosure of structural violence. This recognition and fundamental change in the attitude by simply returning to the grounds of the gospel, and it requires resilience—resistance that opposes the temptations of violence and abuse of power.

THIS REQUIRES WOMEN AND MEN WHO NETWORK AND LINK UP WHO CONSCIOUSLY MAKE THEMSELVES VULNERABLE BY OPPOSING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE, NAMING IT, AND DISCLOSING IT. This is the only way our Church structures can become protective structures in which the rights of children, minors, vulnerable adults and women are respected, and the suffering of the affected women and men is recognised and abolished.

Robert Mickens: Thank you, Mary. I want to move now from Germany to India, to another person we've not heard from yet today. Virginia Saldanha.

Virginia Saldanha: I belong to the Archdiocese of Bombay in India. I have worked in the structures of the Church for about 20 years. The first reference to abuse was officially put in one of our statements of the first Indian Women Theologians meeting, which I had started as a commission for women in India. We just put a sentence over there, and that rattled the hierarchy a bit, but this continued to be a topic of conversation only among women.

Since many sisters are the target of abuse, I talked to leaders in congregations, but they all seemed very evasive about giving me an answer or any concrete solution. And I would hear, **“WE SETTLE IT IN-HOUSE.”**

That was the most I got. Thereafter, I continued to get sisters coming and talking to me. I remember once at 10 in the night, a sister knocked on my door and said, “Can I come and talk to you?” She told me about the extent of abuse in her region in India. The topic came up again when I was at the East Asian Meeting of Women, which was my last meeting in the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences in 2010, and prodded by the chargé d'affaires of the Vatican, who was present at the meeting. He asked me, “Virginia, what have you done about sex abuse of women in the Church?” I was very surprised that he would ask me that question, so I said, “I think I must say something about it during the meeting.” I told the emcee, “Encourage the women to talk about this.” There was one sister who told her story about abuse in the Church. Since it came up in the meeting, it entered our statement.

Following that, as Robert said, I’m a writer, so UCAN approached me and said, “Why don’t you write an article about it?” Since I had so many stories already, I wrote an article and it was published, and that article went all over the world. I know that UCAN was pressured to remove that article from the web. It only exists now on BishopsAccountability.org.

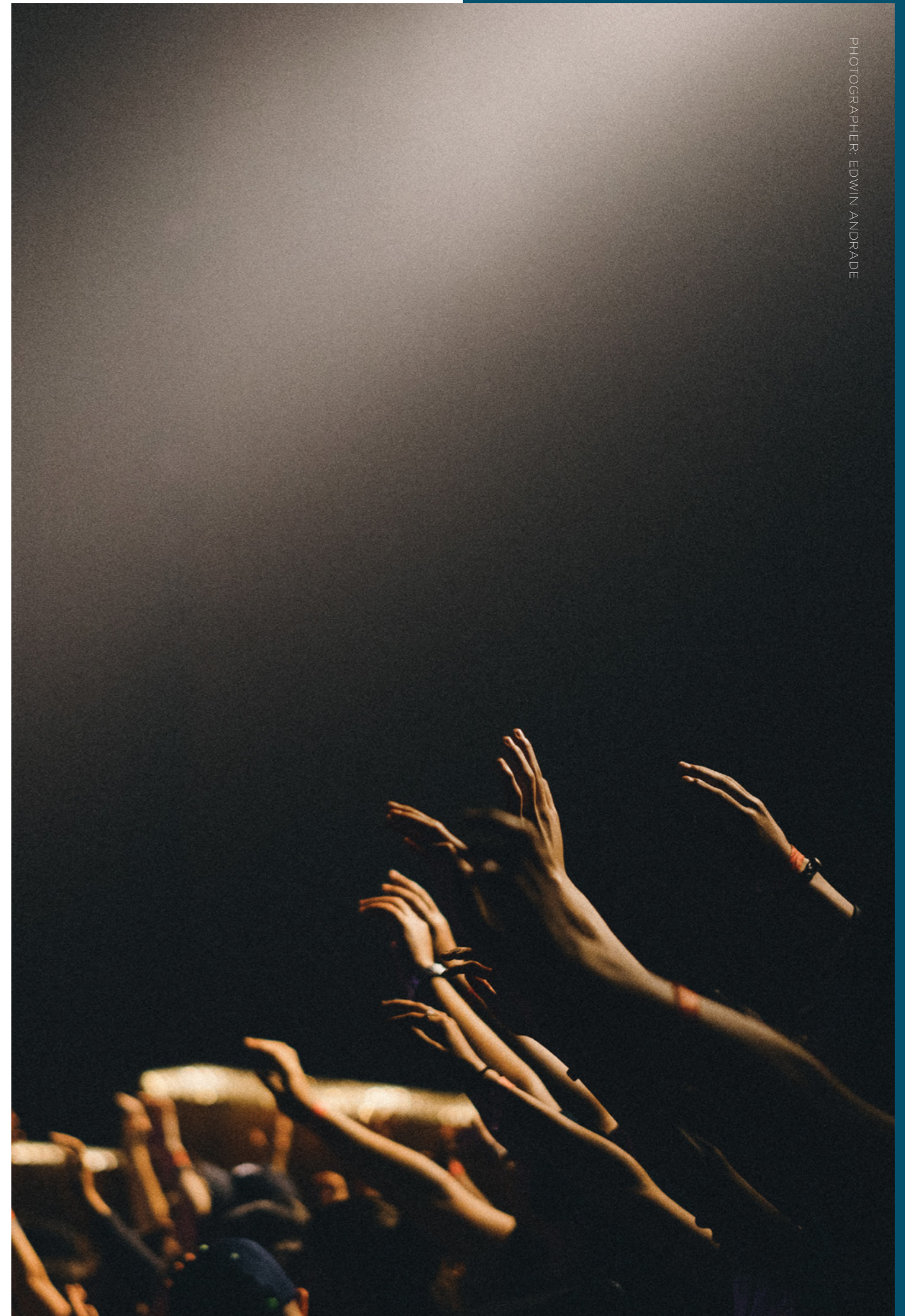
The bishops were rattled because I told the stories of abuse from different parts of Asia, including India. I decided we needed to take this up seriously, but as soon as I returned from that meeting in Asia, that was the end of my tenure in FABC, and I was asking God, praying, “What will I do now?” I was so busy working in all these positions, and now I don’t have any of the positions, so what should I work on? When I returned to India, I had a message from a young woman saying, “I need to meet you urgently.” She came and sat with me for two hours and related to me her abuse during a retreat, where she herself, who was already suffering emotional trauma, went for counsel to this priest, and he told her, “Come to my retreat.” The retreat is called Discernment and Decision. He rapes her and he tells her, “I’m showing you God’s love.”

That girl was so traumatised because, you see, she went to a priest expecting spiritual and

also some kind of advice to help her to come out of her trauma, but he pushes her further into a trauma. Then she struggles with it for a number of years; she finds out that this priest has been raping other girls. She had already gone to three separate bishops in the diocese, the cardinal and two of his auxiliaries, and they did nothing. The priest was told to go to the vocational centre for treatment. He was in my parish, incidentally. I would see him coming back to the parish every two weeks. When this girl came and told me, I put the pieces of the puzzle together. Then I called together a group because I said, I should not be taking this up alone, I knew how dangerous it was. I called the group together and I said, we’ll take it up as a group. We already have a women’s group there in Bombay. The cardinal phoned me and spoke to me about 45 minutes on the phone, he tried to ask me how much I knew about the case. I said, “I know whatever you know, because I know this victim has already gone to you. Please implement an investigation.” “Oh, but I am busy,” he said. I told him to “Appoint a bishop.”

Anyway, we helped him put together an investigation team, the investigation was done. The girl brought a number of witnesses from other retreats, they gave their testimony. The report was done, presented to the cardinal, and then we kept asking him every month for his response. He said he sent the papers to Rome and he has to wait for the response. We waited six months and we asked, “You haven’t got a response?” There was no response. We kept putting pressure on him. We sent him a couple of legal letters. He said, “But the priest is not listening to me. I’ve told him to leave the parish and go.” I said, “Do you know, Cardinal, I have stopped going to church because that priest comes and says Mass? I walk out of church when he comes there to say Mass. I can’t sit in church and be present at the Mass that is celebrated by this priest. It troubles me a lot.”

But the priest was still there and the Cardinal kept saying, “He’s not listening to me.” I said, **“IF IT WAS SECULAR SOCIETY, IF WE HAD GONE TO THE POLICE, THIS MAN WOULD HAVE BEEN IN JAIL,”** but no, he was still there in the parish. Until finally, during Christmas time, I heard an announcement in the church that “Father so-and-so is being transferred to the seminary. We thank him for his services in the parish.”



BUT WHERE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS FAILED IS IN WHAT THEY DO WHEN THEY CATCH A PREDATOR

— BARBARA DORRIS

A group of us women went to the cardinal and said, "Why did you not tell the parish the truth, why this man was removed?" The cardinal just got up and said, "I do not have to give you an answer. Your meeting with me is over," and he walked away. So this is the response we get when we go to the Church with issues like this. Thereafter, I suffered tremendously in my parish. I was maligned, I was marginalised. I heard that the priest say, "Do not involve her in anything in the parish." That was my experience.

Then I had another opportunity to work on this issue. The Holy Spirit Sisters has an NGO that works for the empowerment of women, started by Father Zeitler, SVD. They read my article and said, "Virginia, we want to work on this issue. Let us work together." After one consultation, we decided to get some voices to speak. Just randomly, one sister who was giving a talk said that when she was in one of the seminaries, the idea was to just ask the seminarians, "How many of you were abused? Just write 'yes' on a slip of paper and pass it on to the front." She said 40% in that class said they were abused as children. So the whole issue of abuse has been there, whether it is in the Church, whether it's been in families, but the Church has never, ever spoken about it; has never called it a crime; has never called it a violation of human rights, of children's rights, of women's rights. It has been there.

After the second consultation, we started making a policy which we decided to present to the CBCI for prevention of further abuse in the Church. We presented it in 2013 to the Catholic Bishops Conference of India. It was only in 2017, September last year, that the Catholic Bishops Conference in India finally adopted a policy because there was pressure from the government for all institutions to have a policy to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace. We reminded the Church that they are the workplace of the priests. So they finally adopted a policy. Then we had another really terrible case of abuse, where two orphans were abused by two priests in the same parish. Again, they came to us and we told them, "Go to the Archbishop's house, tell your story." The first question that was asked of them was, "Who else have you told about this?" I told them, "When they ask you that question, say, nobody." They were told, "Go back. After one week, come back and tell us what you want us to do for you." There were no investigations. Next thing we knew, that priest from that parish

was flown out to Canada on a sabbatical. And that is the way abuse cases are dealt with in the Church.

The current case that we are handling right now in India is significant because the survivor nun has taken a very strong stand in her efforts to get justice. For the first time, a sister has gone public about her abuse when the institution failed her. For the first time, a bishop has been named as the abuser. Going public has helped in getting her supporters from the community in her state in Kerala, and from different parts of India. But it has also divided the Church because there are many who believe the story of the bishop who says, "I never abused her." You must understand those women have the experience of abuse would never come out and make up a story of abuse because it's such a risky thing. It's not something that people can just dream up one day and say, "Oh, I want to get this bishop into trouble, I'll say he abused me," because culture will damn the woman. Culture will blame the woman and really make her suffer. So she's not going to invent a story. We believe her, we support her, we have been helping her. We have written letters right up to Rome, to the nuncio. We have written letters to all the bishops in India, but nobody has bothered to reply to us. Instead, my bishop, who is the president of the conference in India, says, "I have not heard of this. This sister has not contacted me. I have only learned about this from the press," but it didn't trouble him. It didn't trouble him that there was a woman who was complaining of abuse from a bishop.

The case has become a very good example to demonstrate how clericalism works in the Church to immunise clergy from any kind of wrongdoing, and to censor anyone who challenges the power of the clergy. I would define clericalism as a power that lays claim to entitlement and privilege with the status of priestly ordination. **TOGETHER WITH FINANCIAL CONTROL AND SPIRITUAL POWER, IT GIVES AN ASSURED IMMUNITY FROM ANY KIND OF ACCOUNTABILITY**, as we have seen in all the stories that have come out, and this particular bishop in India has tremendous money-power.

There was a case where a priest was sent, in a roundabout way, to talk to these sisters, offering them money to withdraw the case, because finally the sister went to the police. She was offered a big sum of money, with land and a building for her to move into if she would withdraw her case against the bishop. We see also canon law protecting the power of the ordained, I think it is time for the people of God to speak up. We all have to take responsibility for what is happening in the Church. **WE SHOULDN'T STAND BY AND WAIT FOR THE POWERS THAT BE TO CHANGE THE STRUCTURES, THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN.** We've got to call for a change of structures, or we have to begin to change the structures from below.

Robert Mickens: Thank you, Virginia. Barb, it might be good for you to jump in. Some of the things that Virginia was talking about, you've had some experience with hierarchy. Barb didn't talk a lot about her experience with SNAP; she talked about her personal experiences as a survivor of abuse. But Barb was very much involved with the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests and they were blamed a lot and they were not believed for so long. As Virginia and others have said, the institution has tended to doubt the testimony of the abused. That perhaps is changing now as the crisis is showing itself to be universal, and not just limited to certain geographical or linguistic areas. But Barb has taken on the hierarchy. Why don't you begin with your remarks now?

Barbara Dorris: I see amazing people sitting in this room, people with talent, scholars, researchers and organisations, and the very fact that you're here is encouraging because it's going to take great minds to make this change. In my years working with SNAP, for the majority of it, I was the outreach director, and I talked to thousands and thousands of survivors, family members, and our supporters.

I watched survivors risk everything; their reputation, their jobs, their families, because they wanted to expose the predators, and by exposing the predators, you protect the kids. I watched survivors, like Virginia said, turn down enormous amounts of money, because they would not sign the settlement agreements until the documents were released, the documents that exposed the cover-up and the corruption within the hierarchy.

I think you need to remember that SNAP, at its high point, had three paid employees. Everything was done by the volunteers; they are the ones who have done the majority of the work, and when you think, a group of volunteers has taken on one of the most powerful and wealthy religious organisations, it's pretty amazing, and they have, ever so slowly, forced them to change.

WE WOULDN'T BE WHERE WE ARE NOW WITHOUT THE JOURNALISTS, WHO HAVE DONE THE RESEARCH, WHO EXPOSED THE CORRUPTION, WHO REFUSED TO BE SILENT. Just now in the United States, we're seeing the civil authorities begin to say, crimes are crimes, no matter what your title, what your uniform, who you belong to. Those are all very encouraging things.

A woman of my age was raised that we are ladies, and we don't get angry. But I'm angry and I'm frustrated. How, in this day and age, can we let women and children be sexually assaulted by some of the most respected and powerful men in our community, and there are no consequences?

I also think we need to consider the fact that while all sexual abuse is horrific, when it's done by a member of the clergy, there are some added dimensions. Most of us were raised as very devout children. The Church was our place of safety, our place of refuge, where you went when you needed help, and somehow the perpetrators destroyed that, and wound God into the abuse.

I believe there are predators in every segment of society, probably always have been, probably always will be. But where the Catholic Church has failed is in what they do when they catch one. If they removed the priest when they first were notified that he was a predator, there might have been one or two victims, but when you move them from parish to parish, diocese to diocese, country to country, they often end up with 50 to 100 victims.

I'm going to keep harping on the fact that we need to use proper language. The Church has created some of the most fascinating terms for sexual abuse; boundary violation, Father was too friendly, misunderstanding (I'm not entirely clear how you mis-understandingly

rape someone, but it seems to be there), cultural differences, relationship and affair. We need to call it sexual violence; we need to call it crimes.

I feel the real reason Church officials have chosen, again there's the key word, "chosen", to not take action is because all of their needs are being met. There's no incentive to change. There are no bishops rotting away in jail. Almost nobody has lost their title, their salary or their job. They're still treated with deference and respect. Money continues to pour in. Why would they change? Everything is going their way and it is a choice, and they are choosing not to change.

It's been almost 17 years since this latest explosion on the sexual abuse of mainly children, but we're still waiting for the Church officials to take action. We're still hearing, Policies and procedures and research and commissions. I'm sorry, how long does it take you to figure out it is wrong to sexually assault another human being? Most of us were born knowing that.

Two weeks ago, the United States Council of Catholic Bishops was meeting in Baltimore, and they had, on their agenda, that they were going to vote on how to sanction their fellow bishops for cover-up. The Pope asked them to wait three months until they were meeting here in Rome in February. That may not sound like a lot to you, but if you're a child being sexually assaulted, three months is an eternity, and completely unnecessary. Thank you.

Robert Mickens: Thank you, Barb. I would just remind our audience that 2002 is often the date that people use to locate the beginning of the sexual abuse crisis. That's actual very late, it was in the early 1980s, at least in the United States, where journalists, especially at the National Catholic Reporter, under the direction of the editor, Tom Fox, and the reporting of Jason Berry, in particular did widespread coverage of cases in Lafayette, Louisiana.



WHY IS NO ONE SPEAKING UP?

- PROFESSOR HILDEGUND KEUL





PHOTOGRAPHER: NATHAN DURLAO

Since 1985 to 2002, the bishops, again, took their time and did not do much. It was only in 2002 with the Boston case that it exploded.

Now we're in this next wave since the allegations and the whole case of former cardinal, Theodore McCarrick and the abuse that he's been pretty credibly accused of perpetrating. So just keep that in mind, that this is not something just from this past summer or from 2002, it's something that has been around for a long time.

I think that we can understand and empathise much more with the frustration of the groups that have tried to bring this forward and again, I would remind you all that they have been (and Jason Berry has been, and Tom Fox and NCR have been) much maligned along the process for being out of line and trying to cause problems in the Church. I would just ask you to keep that in mind because now here we are in 2018 and we're still not at a resolution of the problem. Rocio, now it's your turn to make some more comments. Thank you.

Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear: Over the last four years my research focus has been about theological responses for survivors, so I have been interviewing victims. I wrote a report with Professor David Tombs of the University of Otago in New Zealand. We realised that there are a lot of studies about psychological consequences of sexual abuse, about the physical consequences of sexual abuse, but very little about the spiritual consequences of sexual abuse.

One of the most common justifications that you hear from prelates, clerics and people of the Church, for minimising the crisis, is that sexual abuse is not just a reality within the Church, it's all over, it's in the different institutions. But I think that this shows that we don't understand that special characteristic of clerical sexual abuse is not the same. Why? Because one of the key features of the sexual abuse committed by clergy or consecrated people is the spiritual power used to seduce a minor. The priest or pastor "represents" the voice of God and the love of God, and to be betrayed by one of the representatives has enormous consequences on the faith of the victim. In our research, interviewing survivors, we have confirmed that the consequences have been terrible. The abuse affected their own identity. Most of them were Christians, and the faith modelled their own identity as people

of God. They questioned God's benevolence, they had a crisis of faith, they experienced a profound loss of spirituality, and they transferred all their feelings of anger toward God, as if God were the perpetrator.

The Church became a desecrated place, because it's the place where they were abused. So what is important to understand is that in clergy sexual abuse, we have a combination of sexual abuse with spiritual power. When we talk about clericalism, it's not just about governance power. We have created just one, and only one, caste, in which the priest has this huge spiritual power. They are the only ones who authoritatively represent God. We need to leave this old theology of priesthood. The concept of "ontological" transformation that happens in ordination, as if it were a magical effect on the sacrament, is wrong. Clergy are not superheroes. They are not transformed in the day of ordination. They don't become holy. They are not of the Christ. The majority of the people in the Church are laity. Priests cannot exist without laity. Priests exist to serve the laity.

I think here we have a problem when we talk about spiritual power, because also Vatican II and "Christifideles Laici" define laity as the one, we (laity) have the mission to go to the world, to evangelise the world, because we are in the world. My question is, where are the priests? Where do they evangelise, on Saturn or Jupiter? What is the definition of priest? If the lay, their mission is to be in the world, the problem is that we have been defined in relation to priests, so they are the sacred. It's wrong. All of us—priests and laity—all of us are in the world and all of us have to do what we can for this world to become sacred, and have the presence of God. So that division between laity and priesthood is wrong. The theology, the ecclesiology is wrong, and we have to change it.

Another research that I have just finished now is we have been investigating the idea, a very scandalous idea, but I think it's absolutely real, that Jesus himself was a victim of sexual abuse. Because, you have to think, the goal of crucifixion was a practice imposed on prisoners, not just to kill them; they wanted to humiliate, sexually, the prisoners. It was very common in the Roman Empire, to humiliate a victim, to put him naked, because they wanted to sexually humiliate the person, because they know that sexual humiliation is a weapon for power, to demonstrate power.

But we Christians, we have always put the loincloth on Jesus on the crucifix. Why? Jesus was sexually humiliated facing a mob of people laughing at him, naked, and we have covered him. We wanted to ask the victims, "What do you think of the idea of Jesus as a victim of sexual abuse?" It has been fascinating, the answers of the survivors. All of them have said it's historically right, it's realistic. We need to have this image because it's the real Christ that has suffered also sexual humiliation.

I asked them, "Do you think it will help survivors?" The answers have been very different. They said it would not be helpful for the ones who are not Christians. It would be helpful because he represents one of us. But they said no, the ones who need to recognise that Jesus suffered also sexual humiliation are the clerics and the wider Church, because if they understand that Jesus himself was also a victim, they would not treat victims as they have treated us. They will put victims in the centre. It would also be very difficult because of the problem of clericalism we have talked about, the spiritual power, this division between lay and clerics, **THIS ORGANISATION THAT IS A CLUB OF MEN, THAT THE CHURCH IS BREATHING JUST WITH ONE MASCULINE LUNG, SO SUFFOCATING.**

The other question is about the idea of sexuality. The victims told me something very interesting. They said that's why they put on the loincloth, because all the history of the Church, if they are not able to talk about healthy sexuality, they will never be able to talk about its perversion. So I think that one of the problems is that we have had a terrible vision of sexuality, always equating sexual abuse, not as a crime, but as a sin, an offense to God. So of course, if a priest committed a "sin," an offense to God, he just needs to be forgiven in the confession. Why? Because we have not seen the sin as the harm we do to others. It's so wrong because it's a fixation about sex and we are always just judging acts and we are not talking about the harm done to the people, to the victims.

Robert Mickens: Thank you, Rocio. That was said by a former official of the Roman Curia. You worked at the Pontifical Council for the Laity, for how many years?

Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear: Yes, for five years.

Robert Mickens: Five years. So we've got a rich group of people today from different parts of the world, where the whole idea of sexual abuse within the Church, and even within society, has been dealt with differently, at different speeds, according to different customs and traditions. As Virginia was saying, a woman in India would not dare to make an accusation like this because this sister is stuck in her convent, I believe? She's not left the convent because she's afraid for her life.

Virginia Saldanha: She's almost like a prisoner there.

Robert Mickens: So I want to ask the panel, Pope Francis has gathered the presidents of all the world's bishops conferences together in February to look at the abuse of minors. That's a broad title, not very specific. He's got a committee that he's set up with Father Hans Zollner, a Jesuit, who is well known for working on preventative measures and other members. If you could make one suggestion to the bishops, keeping in mind that, again, we're talking a universal response here. I don't know what they're going to achieve. But if you had one thing to say to Pope Francis, Mary, what would you hope, from February?

Mary Hallay-Witte: Listen to survivors. Listen to their stories and let your heart be touched by this, and then you'll know how you have to act. **LET WOMEN BE INVITED AND TELL THEIR STORIES.**

Robert Mickens: Barb, what would you ask, a concrete proposal, perhaps?

Barbara Dorris: I would suggest that they understand that they're discussing criminal behavior. We're not discussing the tenets nor the beliefs of anyone's religion, and that if my car is stolen, I don't call the bishop and say, "Hey, bishop, can you get my car back?" Well, if you've been raped or sexually assaulted, you need to call the police. I don't think it's the Church's place to investigate. If these internal investigations, the past 40 years are any indication, they really stink at it. To me, there's no need to discuss it. The need is, you abide by the laws of the land, and criminal investigations are carried out by independent, professionally trained law enforcement, not your bishop.

Robert Mickens: Virginia, you expressed concern to me yesterday about one of the members on the organising committee, the preparatory committee.



Virginia Saldanha: Yes, one of the chief organisers is my bishop from India, so I was asking myself, what will he contribute, more cover-up ideas? What's going to come out of it? I think I agree with Barb, that we have to now tell survivors to go to the police, because this issue is being taken very seriously in the civil sphere. Violence against women is a worldwide issue, and I think governments are being pressured to take action, and they are taking action. I know in my country they are taking action because there is a lot of pressure, even from secular women's groups. We need to take action where we will see results. We have waited decades. Actually this is a sickness in the Church that's gone back centuries. We just need to read Church history and they have happily kept it covered, but not in this 21st century of communications. It's just explosive. It's like a powder keg waiting just for a spark, and I think that spark is already lit.

Robert Mickens: Rocio, you said that you took concerns to the Peruvian state officials and they did nothing. Has that changed, do you think?

Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear: Well, yes, because in Lima, for example, now they are investigating Sodalitium, and because of the case of Sodalitium, now congress has decided to change the laws. I don't know if it happens in other countries, but in Peru, after you committed a sexual crime, after 10 years, you are free. You are not able to go to jail. So now the congressmen want to change and put the law, because we know that usually survivors talk after 20-30 years, when they are in their 40s or 50s, so that's a good thing. Now congress and the general attorney are doing an investigation against Sodalitium and also they are giving proposals for changing the laws — that's a positive thing that we needed in Peru.

Robert Mickens: That's on the state level. We talked about clericalism a lot — that came up today as one of the elements to this whole tragedy, and it's the key issue identified by the Pope in his Letter to the People of God in

August. He identifies clericalism as being at the heart, and he's very clear; he's not just talking sexual abuse, but abuse of power, spiritual abuse, and I think it's important that we keep that in mind. We sometimes, I think, get bogged down and say the abuse of children and they always say they're mostly little boys, Barb we were talking yesterday, you said no, in the United States, what are the numbers?

Barbara Dorris: At SNAP the victims we helped were about 40% girls.

Robert Mickens: We don't hear that often, I think, in the United States. The picture we've been given by a lot of people in the Church, especially bishops, and most recently by the former Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Cardinal Gerhard Müller, says that these are mostly teenage boys.

Barbara Dorris: But that's part of the smokescreen, because if you say that the victims are teenage boys, then it's a homosexual problem.

Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear: Exactly.

Barbara Dorris: And it's not. Homosexuals are less likely to sexually assault a child than a heterosexual, but now they've got everybody talking about homosexuality and all of a sudden, we've missed the real topic, which is children—boys and girls are being sexually assaulted. I think we need to keep our focus on what is the problem itself, and not these smokescreens.

Robert Mickens: What other smokescreens do you see that need to be eliminated?

Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear: Two weeks ago, before coming here, a priest approached me and he was a little bit angry with me because I published an article asking for the defrocking of a priest. He was already in jail and the survivors in New Zealand were asking for the defrocking of the priest. So he said, "Rocio, but defrocking is not the solution," and I said, "Well, it is. If you commit a crime, you are not able, and you must not, continue being a priest."

I say these are the unhealthy ideas that we have to change. This priest told me these ideas: first, we have to ask the victims for forgiveness, so we want to silence victims, asking for forgiveness. I say to myself, a perpetrator can never demand forgiveness because forgiveness is a free act. Forgiveness is not the point. We need justice to build forgiveness and we, as representatives of the Church, cannot demand forgiveness.

Second, he said, The moral failure of some individuals is not all the Church because there are so many good Priests. Again, no! **IT'S A SYSTEMIC PROBLEM BECAUSE IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT PERPETRATORS; IT'S A SYSTEM THAT HAS ENABLED, FOR DECADES AND DECADES, THE SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS.** So it's not an aberration within the system; it's an aberration that's fluid through all the system because of this club of boys that protects themselves.

Third, he said to me that this was a problem of the past and it's in the past. Now we call it crime, but in the past it was not seen as that. It's not true. We have to call it now, its name, and we can judge the past with our eyes now. It is a crime.

I think we need to change these unhealthy ideas. We try to justify saying it's a problem of all institutions. No, the problem within the Catholic Church is different because we are talking about this spiritual power, this sacred power, that makes the dynamic absolutely different.

So we have unhealthy ideas and an unhealthy culture. We need to have a diversity of leaders, including women in the different governance systems, but I also think it's not possible that the only ones who can represent God are the priests, the males. So we women have no voice to proclaim the gospel? Why? Imagine what a liturgy in which women are represented, in which we might even have a voice to do a homily? I have the dream of a Mass in which there would be a priest and a woman preaching. Why not? I'm talking little by little change. Female deacons could be a start

Robert Mickens: Perhaps a woman to proclaim the resurrection, for example.

Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear: Exactly, like in the primitive Church.

Robert Mickens: Like Mary Magdalene, the first one to witness Jesus resurrected. I think you've hit on a very, very important issue that we've not talked an awful lot about. We've been talking about the experience of being abused, but we've not talked about the role of women in helping the Church address the problem of abuse. One of the things that really has always struck me as kind of odd is that at the beginning...at least in 2002 in the United States when the bishops met for their big meeting

in Dallas and came up with their charter, they didn't involve any women in this. For all that John Paul II talked about feminine genius. You can argue the points of this vision, but one thing is, women are mothers — men are not. The motherly instinct of a woman, especially when children are vulnerable and abused, I think there was a missed opportunity, personally.

Logically, as the Church moves at glacial speed, what would be the first step for women to be involved in decision making? How would you see women being involved? How could you convince the Pope in a way that he could accept without pissing off ten more cardinals?

Virginia Saldanha: I would just ask him, look at Jesus, what did Jesus do? I really feel that the Church has digressed from the message of Jesus. They've lost the message of Jesus. They've got wrapped up in empire, from where they were given birth. The Church got its birth from empire, and they've got so involved and wrapped up in that pomp and show and trappings of empire, that they have lost the message of Jesus. I would beg the Church to go back to the message of Jesus, to read the gospels carefully and see how Jesus involved women.

You just spoke about Mary Magdalene being the first messenger. The woman at the well brought a whole village to Jesus. Is there any example in the gospels where a man brought any single person to Jesus? There are women who brought people to Jesus. Women are the best evangelisers, but it looks like the Church has lost all of this, or they just don't know about it, or they just don't care about it. I would just tell them, go through the gospels and go back to Jesus, and live the values of the gospel and the values that Jesus gave us.

I think they should begin with this meeting in February, get a sufficient number of women involved. Women who have already been working on this issue, sufficient number of survivors. I think unless there are 50% of the people of God present there, survivors and advocates, together with the bishops, nothing is going to change. It's just going to be another boys' talk shop.

Mary Hallay-Witte: I would like to add, I'm not a bishop, I'm not a priest, I'm not a victim; I am a lay person walking in the Church, seeing what's happening. I have seen the files, I have seen what's happening. It's the

bystanders we also need to address.

WE NEED THE SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE IN THE PARISHES, IN THE COMMUNITIES, IN THE SCHOOLS, THE OTHER TEACHERS WHO SAY.

We need more people to support the ideas of what we're talking about today, and not just lay there and say, "Okay, fine, here comes Mary again. Yeah, she's nagging in everyone's ears." We need people to support—all the people—not only the bishops, not only the priests. We need all the faithful in our parishes and everywhere we are.

Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear: I would like to add that I think it's very important, what you are saying about the bystanders. There is a theologian who comments, he said something very interesting, that the problem of sexual abuse is not just a problem of the victim or just a problem of the perpetrators, but it's a problem of the community, in which all the communities involved and the bystanders have a very important role.

The bystanders sometimes don't know what to do. Sometimes they remain silent, sometimes they remain angry, sometimes they don't know or they just don't do anything. Or they are just tired of hearing the stories. While the bystanders are the majority of the Church, because not all of the people of God have been abused or are perpetrators. If the bystanders stand up and take action, I think we need that.

Robert Mickens: I want to move to a slightly different aspect of all this, and that is reconciliation. It seems to me that we never get to a point where people who are survivors of abuse, it seems sometimes can never get to a reconciliation. I talked to a psychologist once and he said you get so far and the most difficult point is where people can move on with their lives and bring about reconciliation. I think of something I've recommended, similar to a truth in reconciliation process like they had in South Africa over apartheid. Is that a possible way? Just untangle that a little bit.

[To Rocio] As you said, you can't demand someone forgive. But we know, I think, spiritually, that unless the person that is wronged comes to a point of forgiving, that person is not free, and the person who has done wrong cannot be free. We're in a bind until there's a reconciliation. How possible is that?



PHOTOGRAPHER: FELIX MITTERMEIER

I REALLY FEEL THAT THE CHURCH HAS DIGRESSED FROM THE MESSAGE OF JESUS.

— VIRGINIA SALDANHA



Barbara Dorris: I do think it's possible but I think the problem for many survivors has been that they believe forgiveness means "Okay, you hurt me. It's okay, go away, no big deal. I forgive you." But forgiveness does not mean there's no holding them accountable, there's no justice in it. I think if survivors understood better that I can forgive the perpetrator but it doesn't mean I don't want justice, there would be more forgiveness. I think our problem has been in defining forgiveness.

Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear: Absolutely.

Virginia Saldanha: I think my understanding of forgiveness goes hand in hand with making amends. Reconciliation goes hand in hand with making amends. Amends can be made only when they see that the Church is serious. Up to now, the Church has not shown any seriousness about addressing this issue. Of course this meeting is called and they make a big issue of it, but what comes out, only God knows.

So therefore, I think at this meeting, that's why I'm asking that there are sufficient number of people equal to the bishops whom they will listen to if they are really interested in a solution. **THERE CAN BE NO RECONCILIATION UNLESS THE SURVIVORS SEE THAT THE CHURCH IS REALLY SERIOUS.**

I think survivors will see the Church is serious when they see enough people over there being listened to and involved in the whole process, right up to bringing out the final document from this meeting. I think there has to be that involvement.

So reconciliation means making amends and making amends means bringing out all those files and saying, "Yes, we have so many." The Church, up to this day, has not admitted this wrong. Please let us be clear about this. Up to this day, the Church has not admitted that it has done any wrong. They just keep finding excuses why they don't act, and they invent excuses, and that's so frustrating, and that's so hurtful to victims.

In India, I know many victims who have just been married off and they think that's a very good idea. They don't care what happens later on in the lives of that couple, and that's really not right. I think the Church has to go back to the message of Jesus. The Church has to show seriousness that it wants to address this issue, and up to this day, as an advocate, I have not seen seriousness about this. No.

Robert Mickens: In your experience, would you agree with that? Have you found people who are getting serious in Germany?

Mary Hallay-Witte: I have the feeling that in the German Church, we are very far away from asking this question. We have to do our homework before we actually can ask this question. I told my bishop when reports are coming out, you don't say, "Please forgive us," just say, "I am sorry, and I have my responsibility in this part." And he said, "That's like going to confession." I said, "Yes, that's like going to confession."

Robert Mickens: It was that difficult for him to...

Mary Hallay-Witte: It was very difficult for him. He did say sorry then, in the end, but I think we're far from that. We have to do so much homework in working out what has happened, and saying, "Yes, it has happened." Not only a handful of young bishops, all the bishops in the bishop conferences have to do their homework.

Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear: I think also one important element for this forgiveness, one of the most profound wounds as a survivor is a betrayal of trust; they have been betrayed in their trust so the only way to reconcile them, or help to reconcile them, is to find again that trust. **BUT IF WE AS A CHURCH DON'T DO ANYTHING, THE PROBLEM IS THAT THEY FEEL RE-VICTIMISED.**

When we don't listen to them, when we make justifications, when we cover up, when we give promises and we do nothing, they are re-victimised and they cannot forgive. I think, of course, forgiveness is the goal, but what I think is that first, we have to do our homework as a Church.

For example, I have a very good relationship with survivors and they know that I am a Catholic, and they feel that they can trust me, but they don't feel the same with other people from the Church. So because they feel that I am on their side, I am really centred on them, I think that's a way of reconciliation, because they can feel, again, the love of God from someone who belongs to the Catholic Church. For me, reconciliation has a countenance, has a face, and we have to be that face.

Robert Mickens: Interesting. That face right now is a male face in the Church. I want to ask you each what concretely can women bring to this, and what roles should women be playing in the abuse crisis right now? What do women bring that men cannot, or are not bringing, to this right now?

Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear: I think, as we don't have power, we don't care too much about the institution or the image. I think that we women are more rebellious than men. Men always protect the law, the institution, they are always worried. We don't care. We want to protect the vulnerable. So I think that's one of our virtues, our strengths.

Robert Mickens: In what concrete way could women be employed, because unfortunately, the people who hold the strings of power are the men?

Mary Hallay-Witte: Well, I was careful in saying the women must come and clean up the mess the men made. In Germany, everyone is screaming now, oh yes,... the women have to go into the training to become a priest and they have to do this and that, and I say, well, okay, five years ago they said women have to come into leading positions in the Church, and the people who have been prepared are leaving the Church at the moment.

Yes, of course, we had 2,000 years' time to be part of this Church and I don't think it's only the solution that the women are coming now. There has to be far more. We're coming in with maybe our sensibility for life because we give birth, but men are fathers and they should have the same sensibility for life, and to nurture and protect life.

I'm more critical at the moment about these voices saying, "oh, we need the women now to clean up this mess." Yes, we can clean up mess, but then we're in our role again in the background, always cleaning up and doing the cooking and everything.





So I think we have to balance and see all the resources, all the wisdom we bring, and that we are courageous women who alongside men make society a safe place in the world.

Robert Mickens: Interesting, interesting point. I didn't think of it that way, and I didn't mean to suggest that women now have to come in and clean up the mess! But taking a leadership role, what kind of leadership roles? We can leave aside for a moment the question of ordination, but what roles would you like to see women in drafting or coming up with the solutions to this?

Virginia Saldanha: I want to say again, that women should be present at the February meeting. The women should be 50% involved in decisions, 50% voting, 50% involved in drafting the document. **THEY HAVE TO RECOGNISE THAT WOMEN HAVE THE TALENT, WOMEN HAVE THE CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY OF CONTRIBUTING IN THIS.** They have not done a good job so far; they have done no job so far. They have just kept the structure of patriarchy going.

Robert Mickens: What you're saying it goes to the issue of clericalism as well. If you're scratching your head and saying, "What exactly do you mean by clericalism?" a very good article that I've found extremely informative was published in 2002 in America magazine (it's a Jesuit publication in the United States) by a man named Russell Shaw, who was the Public Affairs Officer for the United States Conference of Bishops back in the '80s for a number of years.

That article was brought to my attention again just last week. It was written 16 years ago. It's hard to believe, because re-reading it, it could have been written this morning. He starts off by saying clericalism is like the wallpaper. It's all blended in so much that we don't even recognise it for what it is anymore. I would contend that we're all involved in promoting

the clericalist culture, lay people.

I've said many times, you don't have to wear a Roman collar or religious garb to be a clericalist, that we put priests on pedestals as clericalism. I would just suggest that if you're interested, because people have strange ideas or confusion about what clericalism is. America magazine, Russell Shaw, it's called The Abuse Crisis and Clericalism, 2002.

We are just out of time and so I just want to say a warm thank you to all our panellists for participating in today's informative discussion.

**WOMEN'S VOICES
NEED TO BE RECOGNISED
IN THE CHURCH.**



CLOSING REMARKS

CHANTAL GÖTZ

Managing Director, Voices of Faith

Thank you to each and every one of you for being here today to listen, learn, connect and take action on behalf of victims and survivors of this ever-growing sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church.

Barbara, Doris and Rocio's stories brought about so many mixed emotions in me. There is anger of course, over the cover up, the lack of support, the abuse of trust and authority. There is sadness, of the pain, silent suffering, shame and guilt that each of them was made to feel for a long time. There is helplessness due to the ever-growing nature of this scandal, it seems everyday we hear of a new story being uncovered.

But the strongest emotion I have in my bones is a burning desire to scream out about this injustice, to speak because it hurts to bite my tongue. I refuse to live in a world where abuse of power by leaders in this church remains unchallenged. I refuse to live in a world where women's voices are drowned out, unheard or silenced. I refuse to live in a world where the scales of equality are tipped to favour one gender over the other.

SO WHAT CAN WE DO TO CHANGE THAT?

When I started Voices of Faith 5 years ago, it was a way to celebrate and recognise the incredible faith-filled Catholic women who were on the ground, doing really amazing and hard work on the margins. We flew women in from around the world year on year to share their stories and their legacy of work, at the only International Women's Day event ever held inside the Vatican. These were the heroes on the front lines, working with community and striving for social justice in places where women were overlooked and treated like second class citizens.

In five years, I've learnt some hard truths about my church. Voices of Faith tried in many ways to dialogue with the Church leadership. But it was mostly a one sided monologue and whatever we did was seen as a threat instead of a help to the Church. Voices of Faith always had and still has the intention and the vision to do good which comes from our strong Christian values. But our work was never really appreciated or seen as an offer to help.

The question remains: Why doesn't Pope Francis and the Vatican hierarchy want our help? How many times did I ask myself in these last months: Do I act hypocritically in supporting through Voices of Faith, a system that protects first its perpetrators than the victims? Why do I stay in this Church that makes me more sick than healthy? I guess many of us asked and are still asking similar questions. I stay because I believe in social justice! And I still believe it will be given! We just need to be ready to work together for it. The time for change is now! After today's event I am even more encouraged to do whatever is needed to improve and make worthy the current systems in our church. Gender equality in the Church is not just a cultural issue but one on which the survival of this Church depends. Women in leadership roles at all levels of the Church will open opportunities for the Church to address its decline and collaborate together on solutions to reverse it.

In January 2019 VOF will launch a global digital campaign that will focus on un-silencing women and highlighting that progress will never be achieved if we remain silent. This campaign will be a catalyst for change, a movement that becomes too loud to ignore. It will uncover stories from all over the world fighting for the same thing we in this room are today, but on a global level, united in one voice - women have a role to play in leadership for the future of our Church, for its survival, for our daughters.

THE TIME FOR CHANGE IS NOW AND WE HOPE YOU'LL JOIN US IN OWNING AND DRIVING THIS CAMPAIGN IN 2019.

We will be sure to keep you posted because we cannot do it alone.

Building on the analysis and experiences of the experts who participated in this event, Voices of Faith calls for urgent action on the following points in connection to the February 2019 meeting of Presidents of Bishops' Conferences in Rome:

1. A complete list of participants, their credentials and the agenda of the meeting to be made public at least six weeks prior to the beginning of the meeting.
2. All proceedings and voting on any documents during the meeting is made public in order to facilitate transparency.
3. Diverse voices of women survivors and advocates should be invited to participate and be heard at this meeting. Therefore a dedicated time allocation should be given for women's voices, such as those who spoke in Rome on 27th November. Women's voices are crucial to any credible efforts to stop and prevent abuse.

Thank you to everyone who made this event happen, thank you to our wonderful story-tellers, panel members, singers, my staff, our work would not be possible without **you**.





#OVERCOMINGSILENCE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN 2019

The Catholic Church is facing a crisis in the 21st century. The next generation of Catholics are questioning the structure of Church hierarchy and its ability to respond to a changing world and emerging problems, including sexual and power abuses. Many of these questions are coming from deeply faithful Catholic women who are asking why the Church is so slow in recognising their value and opening decision making roles to them; roles that incorporate their faith, charism, expertise and education into structures of authority at all levels. With over 1.2 billion Catholics worldwide, over half being women, we must ask ourselves, why there is very little to no representation of diverse female voices in decision making roles within the Catholic Church? Decisions that affect all of us, cannot be voiced by half of us and without female voices in leadership, half the Church remains silent.

**GET INVOLVED IN
#OVERCOMINGSILENCE
LAUNCHING IN JANUARY 2019.
VISIT WWW.OVERCOMINGSILENCE.COM**

Upload your photo and message to the Catholic Church leaders asking to talk honestly and openly about women's roles in decision making in the Church.





WHY IS NO ONE SPEAKING UP? WOMEN'S VOICES IN THE ABUSE CRISIS

Professor Hildegund Keul

Should we stop ordaining heterosexual men as priests in view of the fact that many of them have raped girls and women? That is the question posed by Hildegund Keul in her comment on a conference in Rome organised to discuss the issue of sexualised violence against girls and women.

In the current debates on sexual abuse in the church, women's voices are seldom heard. Sexual violence, however, is not only a male issue – all the more important, therefore, that women have an open platform. The conference 'Overcoming Silence – Women's Voices in the Abuse Crisis' which took place in Rome on 27th November 2018 offered women such a forum. Conference participants discussed sexualised violence against girls and women and the church's cover-up of this abuse.

The conference brought together women and experts from around the globe, dedicated change agents from the USA to New Zealand, from Peru to Germany, from Africa to Asia.

It was a well-chosen location. Amid the impressive setting of the Biblioteca Angelica library on Rome's Piazza Sant'Agostino square, the question was addressed of how sexual abuse and the covering-up thereof are connected with the theological traditions of the church. The event succeeded in bringing together various perspectives from around the world in one room, a feat made possible by 'Voices of Faith', a Catholic initiative based in Rome with an outstanding network of global connections.

THE AIM OF 'OVERCOMING SILENCE' IS TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE IN THE CHURCH AND TO PUSH IT FORWARD IN LINE WITH THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL.

One side benefit of the conference is that it disproves attempts to place the entire burden of responsibility for sexualised violence onto the shoulders of 'the homosexuals'. Although much may be controversial in this field, one thing is beyond dispute: In the Catholic Church there are no lesbian priests to hold liable for the many cases of covered-up sexual abuse of girls. Or should we stop ordaining heterosexual priests now because numerous paedo-criminal priests have raped young girls and heterosexual men have raped women? The moment women raise their voices and are heard, the strategy of shifting responsibility no longer works. And that is precisely what happened in Rome on 27th November 2018.

Barbara Dorris represents 'Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests' (SNAP), the largest support group for people who have suffered sexual abuse in church institutions. What began life as just a small group grew rapidly in 2002 when the Boston Globe reported on the abuse in one diocese. Barbara Dorris had already joined the movement beforehand when she became aware of a priest sexually molesting a school girl. She, herself, had stifled the memories of the violence she had suffered as a six-year-old Catholic girl at the hands of a local priest.

WHY IS NO ONE SPEAKING UP?

What do people think when they see a priest repeatedly taking a young girl into his bedroom? Her experience: God is drawn into the abuse. Spirals of violence are spirals of silence. Internal church proceedings have no effect whatsoever.

Dr Rocio Figueroa Alvear is a Peruvian theologian and currently works as a lecturer at Good Shepherd College in Auckland, New Zealand. She carries out research into theological and pastoral responses for survivors of church sexual abuse. Theology and spirituality are enmeshed in the abuse and the covering-up thereof. As a teenager, Figueroa Alvear joined the highly influential movement 'Sodalicio' (Sodalitium of Christian Life) which, in 1997, received pontifical recognition from Pope John Paul II as a society of apostolic life. As an adolescent, Rocio Figueroa Alvear suffered sexualised violence masked as 'spiritual exercises'. The perpetrator used faith as a weapon against his victims, along with the society's conviction that women are inferior, stupid, second-class beings. When the perpetrator passed away and plans were made for him to be beatified, Rocio Figueroa Alvear decided to prevent the beatification and stop the abuse going on in Sodalicio. She came across an ever-increasing number of victims and perpetrators, including the founder of the society. The cardinal in Rome to whom she reported the cases recommended that she immediately become a 'silent soldier' and that she should disclose nothing whatsoever about the offenses.

Doris Wagner reported on the power strategies in 'Das Werk' (The Work) that enabled sexualised violence against young women to take place. Founded in 1938, the Catholic community received recognition from the Vatican in 2001 as a 'Family of Consecrated Life'. Doris Wagner sums up thus: "I trusted them. And they destroyed me." In 2010 she found the courage to go public with her story. "Unless victims speak out the abuse just goes on forever." Wagner points out that the problem of sexualised violence against nuns had long since been a well-known fact in the Vatican. Back in 1994 Sister Maura O'Donohue, a member of the Medical Missionaries of Mary, sent a report on this issue to Cardinal Eduardo Martínez Somalo, former Prefect of

the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. She cited cases in 23 countries including India, Ireland, the Philippines, the United States and several African countries. Doris Wagner, quite rightly, states that if those responsible had pursued these cases correctly as criminal offenses, it is possible that she may not have suffered the massive violence she endured in 2008.

Mary Hallay-Witte, who has been Prevention Officer in the Archdiocese of Hamburg since 2011, introduced the MHG Study into the panel discussion. In her statement she emphasised that when it comes to sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, it's not about the individual perpetrators, but rather it's about structural violence and clerical abuse of power. A genuine shift when it comes to investigating and reappraising abuse cases would require a radical and global change in how those who report abuse and sexualised violence are treated. At the moment women who report sexual abuse or women who are actively involved in exposing sexualised violence, put themselves in an extremely vulnerable position, regardless of whether they are personally affected by the violence or whether they seek to offer support to survivors.

Virginia Saldanha brought India and Asia into the panel discussion. A former coordinator for the Office for Laity of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) and a board member of Pax Christi International, she has a sound knowledge of global justice issues. She belongs to the Archdiocese of Bombay and is actively involved in the Indian Women Theologians' Forum' (IWTF) and the Asia-Pacific Theologians. During her 20 years of work within the structures of her diocese she was repeatedly confronted with cases of sexualised violence against nuns. When she finished working for the FABC she made the decision to remain actively involved in this area on a voluntary basis. Her determined persistency in attempting to call the perpetrators to account resulted in a refusal from the bishop to talk to her and also massive threats on his part.

SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN AND SEXUALISED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ARE VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

No matter who perpetrates them. No matter where they take place. The 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' adopted by the United Nations in 1948 is applicable: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person (Article 3); No one shall be held in slavery or servitude (Article 4); No one shall be subjected to torture, or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (Article 5); Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law (Article 6). 'Overcoming Silence' documented violations of all these human rights. During the conference we learned that some violators of human rights with whom the women had contact were, in fact, people who led a 'life in prayer' and were held in high esteem by all. Rome no exception.

WOUNDS, VULNERABILITY, RESILIENCE AND RESISTANCE WERE EXAMINED FROM VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES AND IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THERE IS A GREAT NEED FOR RESEARCH:

The fact that survivors today are becoming involved as change agents demonstrates that, although exceedingly difficult, it is possible to overcome the victim status. In their traumatised state, how can victims gain resilience? And what needs to be done to help them achieve this? Intensified and interdisciplinary research efforts into the links between vulnerability, traumatisation and resilience are required. Theology is also called upon. Before the cases of abuse became known to the public, the perpetrator's faith remained intact while the victim's faith was destroyed. How can the survivors convert their belief in resurrection into a resource that gives them strength in their pursuit of resistance and resilience?

A specific perception of women that helps contribute to abuse is a topic that came up several times during the conference. Researchers use the term 'vulnerabilisation': A group of people are designated as being particularly weak, blameworthy and seducible in order to make it easier to have them at one's command. 'Once a victim, always a victim' is the hope held by the perpetrator. The perception of men is that they do not become victims or, if they do, their masculinity is damaged.

This too contributes to abuse. Examining gender-specific perspectives is essential - and this includes the issue of women who commit sexualised violence and become perpetrators themselves. How do perceptions of women and men need to change in order to stop the gender-specific spiral of entrapment?

Clerical abuse, sexualised violence and the shameless exploitation of positions of power has resulted in violence on a massive scale becoming entrenched globally and within the church. Because of the conflation of religion and eroticism that exists here, preventative measures alone are not enough. The writings of Georges Bataille offer a closer look into this theme. All of the cases that were reported in Rome could have been incorporated into his analyses of violence. As a result of the disclosure of sexualised violence, the field of research that centres around 'religion, eroticism and violence' is taking on new dimensions.

The fact that women are now willing to speak out in public about abuse and its cover-up is most certainly not something that can be taken for granted. Breaking the silence renders them vulnerable all over again. Therefore, we need spaces for discourse in which people can talk openly and freely. The conference 'Overcoming Silence' opened such a place for this much needed discourse.



WE NEED SPACES FOR DISCOURSE IN WHICH PEOPLE CAN TALK OPENLY AND FREELY.

— PROFESSOR HILDEGUND KEUL

TEXT

Prof Hildegund Keul PhD has, since August 2018, been working at the University of Würzburg in the field of vulnerability research (funded by the German Research Foundation, DFG). There she is head of the interdisciplinary research group 'Vulnerability, Security and Resilience'.

www.verwundbarkeiten.de

FOOTNOTES:

1. See the book title of Mary Hallay-Witte; Bettina Janssen (ed.): *Schweigebruch. From sexual abuse to institutional prevention.* Freiburg: Herder 2016.
2. Wagner, Doris: *Not me anymore: The true story of a young nun.* Knauer 2016.
3. This report is part of my research project on vulnerability, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) - project number 389249041, www.vulnerabilitätsdiskurs.de.
4. See also Keul, Hildegund: *Resurrection as to Art of Living. Restoring Faith after Abuse.* In: Karlijn Demasure et al. (ed.): *Safeguarding. Reflecting on Child Abuse, Theology and Care.* Leuven: Peeters 2018, 205-226.
5. Bataille, Georges: *The erotic.* Munich: Matthes & Seitz 1994.

OUR VOICES STIR THE WINDS OF CHANGE, SO WE MUST SPEAK.



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